

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at the National Governors' Association Dinner

February 26, 2012

Good evening, everybody. Welcome to the White House. *[Laughter]* Did I hear an "aloha" back there? Yes. *[Laughter]* All right, Neil. *[Laughter]*

Let me begin by acknowledging your outstanding chair, Dave Heineman, who's doing an outstanding job in the great State of Nebraska, as well as your vice chair, Jack Markell, of the great State of Delaware, for their hard work.

I have heard that you've had some very productive meetings this weekend. I'm looking forward to having you back tomorrow. We'll be able to discuss a wide range of policy.

But tonight it's about having some fun. We've got the help of the great Dianne Reeves, who is going to be here, and we'll be hearing from later on. So I'm going to be brief, because, although some may disagree, she has a better voice than I do. *[Laughter]*

I've always said that Governors have one of the best, but also one of the toughest jobs around. On the one hand, you guys are in charge, which means that folks know where you live and they know how to find you if something doesn't work. *[Laughter]* They expect you to deliver when times are tough. But you're also in a position to make real and lasting change every single day. You're where rubber hits the road. And as a consequence, you can see your streets safer, your schools doing better by our children, our businesses growing faster, and our communities growing stronger because of the work that you do each and every day.

In recent months, I've had the privilege of seeing firsthand some of the outstanding work that you're doing in your respective States. I've seen the kinds of businesses that are growing in States like Iowa and Washington. I've seen States like Florida who are really doing great work increasing tourism and developing renewable energies. I often get a chance to go to Virginia and Maryland and States in the vicinity, where community colleges are doing a wonderful job retraining our people for the jobs of the future.

So every time I get a sense of what's happening in your States, I'm reminded that the progress is possible. And I want you to know that you've got a partner here in the White House. We're not going to agree on every single issue, every single day. But the thing about Governors is that by nature, and if not by nature, then by virtue of the position, you end up having to be pragmatic, because you have to figure out what works. And that's why I'm confident that we're going to be able to find more and more common ground going forward.

So I want everybody to have a great time tonight. By the way, you all look fabulous. *[Laughter]* You clean up very well. This house has actually seen its share of good times. The story goes that after the inauguration, Andrew Jackson opened the White House to the public and was nearly crushed by the crowd. As things started getting out of hand, the staff decided to pass barrels of ice cream and whiskey out the window—*[laughter]*—to get people out on the lawn, so they wouldn't cause damage and break the chandeliers and the furniture.

So I just want you to know, in case things get rowdy, we also have barrels standing by. *[Laughter]*

But now I'd like to propose a toast to all the Governors for your outstanding work, but especially to all the spouses who put up with us. Cheers. Thank you so much.

Cheers, everybody. All right. I hope you guys have a wonderful time. Let's serve it up.
[*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii; and entertainer Dianne Reeves. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. David Heineman of Nebraska.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : National Governors' Association :: Dinner.

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